OTHER TARGETS OR OTHER LOCATIONS?

An Analysts of Opportunity Structures

PER STANGELAND*

Structural or demographic arrangements in one specific culture form the mentality of their inhabitants, their way of life and, presumably, their crime patterns. This article maintains that residential burglary is complicated and relatively unattractive in a Spanish city. It then analyses two possible forms of alternatives to burglary: a shift towards other targets; street robbery instead of burglary, and towards other locations; breaking into holiday homes in the tourist settlements along the coast. We find empirical support for the first kind of crime shift, but not so for the second one. The tourist area is, in fact, very much subject to burglary, but the burglars do not come from the nearby city. Implications of these findings for criminological theory and for crime prevention policy are discussed.

As suggested by Reppetto (1976), measures which make it more difficult or risky to commit a crime can lead to several forms of crime displacement:

- Offence: Crime displacement towards other types of crime
- Target: Towards a less protected target in the same vicinity
- Method: Better locks force burglars to become innovative
- Place: Towards targets in other areas
- Time: Other hours of the day

A combination of these types of displacement, as suggested by Hesseling (1994) is also a possible outcome of preventive measures. Most research on crime opportunity, crime patterns, situational factors, life style and routine activities, does not confront directly the tricky question of whether preventive measures just put your neighbour at greater risk, and instead is limited to an explanation of why some targets are selected more often than others. Little attention also is paid to long-term effects of existing opportunity structures upon crime patterns. The focus of this article is on how structural arrangements produce a specific crime pattern, and how it displaces crime towards other targets.

Research Strategy

The research strategy chosen for this study was to consider the proximity of a tourist area to a compact city—a kind of natural experiment. We identify different areas, geographically close, but with striking differences in population composition and crime

* Visiting Professor, University of Malaga.
opportunities. This is not a case of crime displacement in the strict sense, as in situations where some crime prevention measure is carried out, and potential delinquents have to look elsewhere for crime targets. No specific crime prevention measures were implemented or evaluated. Instead, differences in opportunity structure between a city and the close-by tourist area are analysed, and the hypotheses deal with the impact of these differences on crime patterns and crime careers.

A typical adolescent criminal career in northern Europe would start with shoplifting, and then extend into attic or cellar burglaries, and the acquisition of the few but essential tricks necessary to become a successful residential burglar (Blumstein et al. 1986; West and Farrington 1977). The adolescent criminal in Spain would also start with shoplifting, but would not be so attracted by residential burglaries, since these are less likely to be successful. Residential burglary has always been complicated in Malaga, and thefts must consequently be carried out with a great deal of ingenuity or with the use of violence. Anecdotal evidence from the nineteenth century supports this hypothesis. They are therefore more likely to continue with break-ins to parked cars, bag snatching and street robberies. In the terms of Cornish and Clarke (1987) the 'choice structuring properties' are different from the northern European scene. One might also say that the 'ecological niche' for property crime is different in all Spanish cities, perhaps in the whole Mediterranean area. The special case of Malaga is that another option—to move out to a more attractive area—is available. Although these two choices of action are not mutually exclusive, we will analyse which one of them is the preferred option. First the area of this study will be described in more detail.

Differences in opportunity structure between Malaga and the Costa del Sol

The city of Malaga in southern Spain has 600,000 inhabitants. It is the capital of the province by the same name, an administrative centre with traditional industries in strong decline. One third of the active work force is unemployed. The city itself has few tourist facilities.

Malaga comes close to what Felson (1994) would call a convergent city. The centre is teeming with life at all hours. Shops are small, and interspersed with bars and cafés. At night, the narrow alleys in the historical centre are filled with young people, who are meeting friends, drinking and listening to music. The active night life and the extensive alcohol and drug consumption do not provoke many violent conflicts. Violent assaults, sexual assaults and homicide rates are at or below the European average (Stangeland 1995a). The predominant violent crime is street robbery.

There are no real suburbs. Most of the city population lives in compact high rise blocks, six to eight storey buildings within a five-mile radius from the city centre. A tourist from northern Europe or North America would assume that these housing areas are slums. Such a conclusion would be false. The inhabitants are lower to upper middle class families, most of them living in big families and with extensive social networks.

1 An exceptionally morbid story of a frustrated residential burglary is found in Diaz de Escovar (1899: 112-14). Several British visitors give their impressions of street crime in Malaga, for instance Robertson (1845), Ford (1845), Lee (1855).

2 Malaga does, of course, also have slums: areas like Los Asperones, Palma-Palmilla, and parts of Trinidad. That is another story. This present description fits areas like Perchel, Ciudad Jardin, Echevarría, etc. Detailed socio-demographic data can be found in Ayuntamiento de Málaga (1992).
OTHER TARGETS OR OTHER LOCATIONS?

Many newly-weds try to find a flat close to where their parents live, and may stay there for a lifetime. Others are immigrants from rural villages, who buy apartments in the same district so that they can live together when they move to the city. These blocks may be ugly, but show high levels of social cohesion.

The city has an inner nucleus with a quite stable population. In a 1982 survey, 60 per cent of the respondents stated that they were born here. An additional 15 per cent came from elsewhere in the province. More than three quarters found it unlikely that they would move in the next five years.

In a country where most dwellings are occupied day and night, one should expect to find relatively low rates of residential burglaries. This theory fits pretty well with the situation in the city of Malaga. The family size is larger than the average in Europe, and the chances that somebody is at home are greater. Most families have one or several adult members without paid employment. A burglar usually looks for unguarded and empty premises, and is less likely to find them in Malaga than in northern European cities.

Apart from the higher level of occupancy of each home, there are some additional obstacles to burglary:

1. Residential mobility is not only low between Spanish regions, but we also find low geographical mobility within the city. Purchase is more common than rentals, and the cost of real estate transaction is prohibitive. Neighbourhoods are, therefore, dominated by home owners who are long-term residents in the area. Such neighbourhoods tend to show lower burglary rates (Baba and Austin 1989, Sampson and Wooldredge 1987, Smith and Jarjoura 1988).

2. Apartments in multi-storey blocks are less attractive to burglars than detached or semi-detached houses, probably because they offer no alternative escape route (Bennett and Wright 1984, Hesseling 1992). Apartment blocks in Malaga have neither cellars nor attics. Such storage areas are popular targets for residential burglars in northern Europe (Wikström 1991).

3. A custom in decline in Malaga, but normal up to the late 1980s, is to employ a male concierge, or lobby porter, during the daytime. They are often given an apartment in the high rise block, and therefore, offer some minimal surveillance at night as well. Several reports on neighbourhood security have found personal surveillance more important than technical protection measures such as entry phones, TV monitors and alarms (Bright et al. 1985, Poyner 1982, Hesseling 1994).

4. Ground and first floor windows always have iron grilles in front of them. These look quite picturesque, but they are not meant for decorative purposes: they are there to prevent unwanted visitors. Iron bars can be bent, but that costs considerable time and effort. It can be done in a secluded private garden, hidden from public view, but not on a window facing a public street.

---

3 See CIS Survey 1513 on residential stability in Malaga, and Gilmore (1990) for a description of village habits in southern Spain. Such habits linger on in the city, and the author has examples of city blocks where immigrants from the same Andalucian village predominate.

4 CIS project 1513, unpublished data. There were similar findings in the 1993 interviews.
A burglar will have difficulty in identifying a good target. All have the same anonymous appearance from outside. Doorbells are seldom marked with names, so that the strategy of looking the owner up in the phone book, and ringing him to see if anybody is at home (Cromwell et al. 1991) will not work.

The typical city burglar is young, inexperienced, and needs a small amount of cash in a hurry. He usually commits the crime within walking distance of where he lives (Bottoms 1994, Hesseling 1992, Wikström 1991). If private dwellings are too difficult a target in Malaga, commercial enterprises might be an alternative. However, shops roll down iron shutters in front of their windows at night, they are small, and the owner may live close by and keep an eye on what happens after closing time. Seventeen percent of all shops and bars interviewed had suffered a burglary or a burglary attempt during the last year (Stangeland 1996). This means that most burglaries are non-residential. However, the burglary rate for commercial enterprises is still below the European mean, where almost one out of three businesses suffer a burglary during the year (van Dijk and Terlouw 1996). We assume that simple street robbery or bag snatching are alternatives to residential burglary. One may also smash a car window, and grab whatever is in sight.

In the case of Malaga, however, a third option for potential burglars can be found along the coast. The city of Malaga itself has few hotels, none of them attractive for tourists. The tourist zone starts ten kilometres outside the city, and extends along the coast in both directions. The airport receives more than two million tourists per year from abroad, and another three million visitors come by car, mainly tourists from inland Spain. The coast has also become the home of some hundred thousand long-term foreign residents, most of them retired. Flats, villas, hotels and restaurants stand empty a large part of the year. The opportunities for burglary in the coastal area are the following:

1. **Households are small.** There are no statistics at all about actual residents, but the stereotype is an elderly couple of Northern Europeans without children. Tourist apartments owned by Spaniards from the inland house larger families, but only in the summer season.

2. **The area is multi-ethnic and with low social cohesion.** Foreign residents have minimal knowledge of Spanish, and little contact with Spanish society. Many flats are rented out on a short-term basis or used for time share, with high mobility.

3. **Homes often stand empty.** Many villas and apartments are locked up after the holiday season. When occupied, the residents spend most of their time outside, on the beach or at the swimming pool of the complex.

4. **Existence of attractive burglary targets.** Tourists can be expected to leave quantities of cash in their apartments. They also possess jewellery and video equipment.

The coastal strip has, in other words, two of the three characteristics which Shaw and McKay (1969) found symptomatic for social disorganization: mobility and heterogeneity. The third factor is lacking: poverty. A British retired bus driver, living on the Costa del Sol on his social security pension may find living conditions difficult, but this hardly breeds crime. The Spanish waiter who is laid off in the low season might be tempted to commit an occasional burglary, but there are fewer pockets of long-term
poverty on the coast compared to Malaga city. Crime displacement from the city to the coast is therefore a possible outcome of this spatial layout.

The city of Malaga has a supply of motivated offenders greater than the burglary opportunities which exist. We find the opposite case in the coastal zone, with more opportunities for burglary than can be exploited by local offenders. The tourist zone, with its hotels, apartments and villas might be called a burglar's paradise, with the additional option of pickpocketing, bag snatching and simple theft of unguarded objects. The main inconvenience is the distance: half an hour to one hour away from the city, by car or bus. A burglary on the coast may take more planning than the urban juvenile offender can cope with. The tourist burglar may need a car, tools for the break in (a car jack or a portable welder, to get through the window grilles) and for bringing the booty back with him. He also needs to know how to avoid dogs and alarms, or, if he prefers hotels and apartment houses, how to look respectable and avoid suspicion. This may be beyond the scope of the young and inexperienced city burglar.

The two underlying hypotheses of this article, to be developed more extensively in the following sections, are, first, that a potential burglar meets more obstacles in Spanish cities than in most other industrialized countries, and that potential burglars to a large extent commit street robbery instead. The high occupancy of private homes and the tight security of shops might explain why Malaga, and Spain in general, has more robbery than burglary. This gives us a natural, real life example of choice-structuring properties which shift crime from one type of offence to another.

Secondly, the potential delinquent from Malaga, instead of turning to street robbery, might migrate out towards the coastal area, where wallets may be left behind on the beach while the owner takes a swim. This is an example of spatial displacement, from one area to another.

Are the abundant property crime opportunities on the coast actually exploited? Are victimization levels generally higher here than in the city of Malaga? Such a finding would indicate that property crime is, in fact, quite opportunity-based and elastic, and that the volume of crime depends more on the available targets, and less on the existing pool of potential delinquents.

Methods

More than 3,000 households in the province of Malaga were interviewed about their experience with crime. 1,565 interviews were conducted in the city of Malaga and 876 in the coastal areas. The 698 interviews from the interior part of the province are excluded from this analysis. The interviews followed the International Crime Survey (ICS) model (van Dijk 1990). Most interviews were conducted by phone.5

5 Interviews of residents were based on a random sample of telephone book listings. Telephone penetration is quite high in both the city and the coast, and the response rate was 85 per cent. The business survey was based on a random sample of Yellow Pages listings for specific trade categories, covering retail sales and services. The response rate was 90 per cent. The tourist survey was carried out in the departure lobbies at the airport. We sampled international departures to get the closest match possible to airport statistics. All passengers 16 years and above about to board these flights were approached, and roughly nine out of ten participated. For a more complete presentation of methods and results of the study see Stangeland (1995: chs. 7 and 10).
Since more than half of the actual population on the coast does not live there permanently, we supplemented these interviews with another 3,424 interviews with tourists, at the airport just before they boarded their flight back home. This gives us a fairly good sample of crime targets among the foreign visitors to the coast. Most of our sample had spent a couple of weeks here on vacation, in August 1994. Roughly half of these visitors were British, while another 20 nationalities were represented in the sample. (Stangeland 1995: 150–7). We also did a survey on crime against business establishments. A total of 389 retail shops and tourist establishments in Malaga and the coastal area were interviewed (Stangeland 1996).

To establish where burglars on the coast come from, we have analysed a sample of all cleared burglary cases in the capital, and all cleared burglary cases in 1993 and 1994 in two coastal districts. We went through the court or police files, found the burglary\(^6\) and retrieved from the attached police documents the burglar's given address, the site of the crime and the type of burglary.

In one coastal district, Fuengirola, we registered the same information directly from the police archives, not from court files.\(^7\) All burglary cases regarded as cleared by the police were included, although they may have been acquitted in court. We consider this difference of minor importance. The important bias in using police and court data about offenders is that so few get caught. According to internal police data 12 per cent of all burglaries are cleared. We have analysed a total of 285 burglary cases, with data about 324 offenders (Stangeland 1995: 158–3). This article presents conclusions and interpretations of this material, restricting data presentation to a minimum.

**Findings**

Table 1 gives the crime risks in three risk groups. The first two groups are covered by our ICS survey, and indicate personal and household crime exposure during the last 12 months. The difference between risks in 'Malaga city' and 'coast residents' gives some

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Malaga city</th>
<th>Coast residents</th>
<th>Tourists</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual assault (women only)</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robbery</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burglary</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car theft</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft from car</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car vandalism</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other theft</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong></td>
<td>1,565</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>3,424</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

\(^6\) Selecting cases of 'Robo con fuerza en las cosas', excluding all cases of break-in in vehicles. The author is grateful to Miguel Ángel Guiterrez who did the data collection for Malaga and Torremolinos.

\(^7\) The data collection was done by the author in March 1995. Thanks are due to the police chief Julian Martínez Izquierdo and chief constable Luis Plaza Romo for granting permission to use the archives and for helpful suggestions.
clues to the differences in opportunity structure between the city and the coastal strip. Robbery and theft from cars are higher in Malaga. Theft and burglary rates are rather low in both groups, compared with other European cities (van Dijk 1990).

However, the rates for coastal residents give us only half the picture. The sample was drawn from the telephone directory, excluding non-Spanish names (Stangeland 1995: 97). However, every second crime in the coastal district is not directed against residents, but rather against tourists and other temporary residents, out of reach of the telephone list sample (Stangeland 1995: 157). The third column therefore complements the picture with risk rates obtained from the sample of tourists at the airport. These percentages are not directly comparable with the annual rates in the first two columns of the table, since the questions relate to their experiences during their holidays in Spain, and the median length of that stay was only two weeks, while the other samples are asked about incidents during the last 12 months. We will not attempt any direct comparison between crime risks for residents and tourists; the samples are too different to be directly comparable, and we place them side by side for illustrative purposes only. However, it is probable that a middle class British resident is more likely to suffer a crime during a two-week vacation abroad than during the rest of the year back home. This does not imply that Spain is particularly dangerous: tourists are at risk wherever they go (Holiday Which 1995: 130–33).

Our main interest is to distinguish crime patterns in the city and on the coast. The robbery figures in the city are very high. During the last year, 4.3 per cent of the sample interviewed stated that they had been robbed, and almost all of them were street robberies. The distinction between robbery and personal theft is sometimes quite slight. An amount of physical force or threat to use force must be demonstrated if the event is to be classified as robbery. A quite common phenomenon is bag snatching ('tirón'): running or driving up behind somebody carrying a handbag, jerking it free and disappearing in the crowd. It is often carried out by two youngsters on a moped; the one on the back seat grabs the bag, and they drive off. Since the rates are so high, it seems appropriate to take a closer look at the conditions that surround these robberies, to see if they are actually the same phenomenon as robberies in other countries.

Of the robberies in Malaga:

1. On one out of three occasions, the robber threatened with a weapon. The most usual weapon was a knife.
2. Three out of every four robberies were successful. The robber ran away with something.
3. The median value of a robbery was 6,000 ptas (50 dollars).
4. One out of four victims was injured. Eight per cent of the victims needed medical assistance.

This coincides pretty well with the data on street robberies from other countries (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1990; Wikström 1991: 75).

We asked for a description of the robberies, and quote some typical examples:

The respondent saw two boys who had halted their motorcycle on the road. He was driving by with a truck, and stopped, because he thought that something had happened to them. When he approached, they threatened him with a knife to give them his money. However, at that moment a police car came by, and they ran away.
The respondent was walking with her sister, when two boys approached them and grabbed her bag. They ran after them, but the boy threatened them with a knife when they approached.

The respondent was walking on a street when a person closed up on a motorcycle and grabbed her bag.

Although the typical outcome of a street robbery in Malaga is no more than 6,000 ptas, it is actually more lucrative than a burglary. The median outcome of a successful burglary was found to be 35,000 ptas ($260). However, even if we disregard the burglary attempts, where the outcome is zero, these 35,000 ptas are the losses suffered by the owner, not the profit obtained by the thief. The burglar is left with goods which are often thrown away, given away or sold for a trifle of their actual worth (Gottfredson and Hirschi 1990). The net profit is probably below the 6,000 ptas obtained in a typical street robbery. The important difference lies in the type of booty: robbers are more likely to get cash.

Burglary figures in the city are more moderate, both compared to robberies and compared to burglary rates from other countries. This does, of course, not mean that burglaries do not exist. The most common crime reported to the police is 'robo con fuerza en las cosas', which means break-ins. However, even after excluding thefts from cars, which stand for a large proportion of these break-ins, we find that only 29 per cent of the burglaries are residential (Stangeland and Felson 1995). A major difference with regard to northern European burglaries is the absence of cellars and attics, and that is compensated for by burglary targets in bars and restaurants after closing hours, also burglaries at industrial sites, businesses or public buildings.

Burglary rates on the coast are higher than in the city. While residents questioned in the ICS survey were more likely to suffer robbery than burglary, tourists reported twice as many burglaries as robberies.

A comparison between Spain and other industrialized countries with respect to robbery and burglary is found in Figure 1. These are relative figures for robbery compared to burglary. We use here the national Spanish figures from the 1989 ICS, and the figures from Malaga from our own surveys.

The RBR index measures relative preference for street robbery compared to residential burglary. The data are drawn from the database of the ICS surveys carried out in 1989, 1993 and 1996 (van Dijk, personal communication). In countries which have participated in several surveys, the mean crime risk for all surveys has been used. Some countries with highly diverging crime rates from one survey to another have been omitted from this comparison.

Some countries have low burglary rates as well as low robbery rates, for instance Finland, where only 0.6 per cent experienced a successful burglary and 0.9 per cent a robbery during 1992. However, two consecutive surveys have confirmed that street robberies are more frequent than burglaries in Finland, which makes it unlikely that the resultant high robbery/burglary ratio is due to sample errors.

---

8 See, for instance, Wikström (1991: table 4.19). Of all burglaries in Stockholm, 51 per cent are characterized as residential. However, half of these residential burglaries are directed against cellars and attics.

9 Our Robbery/Burglary Ratio (RBR index) is calculated the same way that Zehr (1981: 126) calculates his TVR (Theft/Violence Ratio: 100 Robbery/(Robbery + Burglary). An index value of 50 means that the two phenomena show equal rates, and possible scores lie between 0 and 100. One should take into account that burglary rates in these victim surveys are measured on a household level, while robbery rates are individual rates. These means that, even if the score is 50, both events do not necessarily occur with equal frequency.
Fig. 1  RBR index: Relative preference for robbery over burglary
The only other countries with more robbery than burglary are Argentina, the Philippines, Russia, Spain and Brazil. The rating from Malaga city comes quite close to the rating from the National Spanish survey from 1989, while the coastal and tourist surveys from Malaga both give lower rates.

On the other hand, we also find countries in this figure with high robbery rates, matched by even higher burglary rates. This is the case of what can be called 'Burglars' Paradises': the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Their urban structure is dominated by extensive suburbs of family homes, left empty at day time, and often at night time as well. Burglary therefore becomes the preferred illegal option to obtain some cash in a hurry.

This index may, to some extent, measure 'modernization', where countries with low scores (France, Austria, New Zealand, Japan) are more 'advanced' than the rest. Behind this 'modern' crime pattern we might find an urban structure which facilitates burglary more than robbery, a society where credit cards substitute cash transactions, and perhaps also cultural norms which inhibit the use of physical violence.

The high proportion of street robberies relative to residential burglaries in our region may be explained by opportunity structure theory. We can confirm the observations made by van Dijk (1991), that low burglary rates are related to the scarcity of detached and semi-detached housing. One must, however, also take into account family size and the lifestyle of the area. The Spanish lifestyle presents many obstacles to the burglar, and street robbery becomes the favoured option. This finding lends support to our first hypothesis.

**Burglary sites and burglars' residences**

Several projects which have tried to determine the 'journey to crime' show that the average distance between offender home addresses and the selected crime site is moderate, often around one mile; in other words, most offenders are not likely to travel far if the most immediate opportunity is blocked. There are some important reservations to these findings.

First, the 'non-local offenders' are not included in the calculation. In Wikström's work on crime in the Stockholm area (1991: 216), 26.3 per cent of all residential burglars came from outside the Stockholm area. Hesseling (1992) states that 19 per cent of all arrested offenders in Utrecht were outsiders. These outsiders are excluded when the typical radius of activity is calculated.

Secondly, no author on offender mobility discusses the validity of data on offender addresses. The information given to the police when arrested may not be the place where the offender actually lives. The offender may live with a girl friend, in an abandoned building or in a camping trailer, and give, for instance, the parent's address to the police. The notion of somebody getting up in the morning at one specific location and walking over to commit a burglary at a second location may be misleading.

Thirdly, most property crimes are not cleared by the police. Clearance rates for burglary tend to vary between 10 and 30 per cent, and the offenders who do not get caught may live in different areas from the ones who do.

However, in spite of these methodological reservations, the patterns which appear in several different studies are worth further investigation. Crimes of violence and property damage are more 'local' than burglaries, in the sense that the offenders tend
to live close by. Crimes in the suburbs are more 'local' than crimes in the city centre. The centre is more attractive for outsiders and casual visitors. And, lastly, more than half of all crimes cleared by the police are committed by offenders who live, or have their given address, less than a mile away (Wikström 1991: 218; Hesseling 1992). This predominance of local offenders will vary between cities, according to zoning and public housing policy in the area (Bottoms 1994).

Spatial displacement: where do the burglars on the coast come from?

The three charts on the following pages describe our findings with regard to the 'journey to crime'. We are particularly interested in where the burglars on the coast come from. Do potential delinquents from Malaga city take the extra effort involved to prey on tourists at the coast? A high participation of citizens from Malaga in burglaries on the Costa del Sol might indicate that crime patterns are quite flexible, and that the burglary obstacles encountered in the city make motivated offenders move out to the coast instead.

On the other hand, if the percentage of city youngsters among burglars on the coast is found to be moderate, it indicates that existing impediments towards burglary in Malaga actually prevent crime. Some crime is diverted towards other targets, such as street robbery and theft from cars, but spatial displacement is less common.

According to the hypothesis presented earlier, the city of Malaga has a surplus of motivated offenders, compared to available burglary opportunities. This hypothesis is supported by our data: most burglars are locals.

**Fig. 2** Geographic origin of burglars in Malaga City
FIG. 3 Geographic origins of burglars in Torremolinos

FIG. 4 Geographic origins of burglars in Fuengirola
OTHER TARGETS OR OTHER LOCATIONS?

Whereas in the Stockholm and Utrecht materials used as comparison, a fair part of the burglars come from surrounding districts, we find that in the city of Malaga, only 2 per cent come from the coastal zone east and west of the city, and another 2 per cent from the interior of the province. Six per cent are foreigners, basically North Africans, and 14 per cent have no fixed residence. Malaga does not, in other words, present many attractions for outside burglars.

The situation is quite different when we move down the coast to Torremolinos where, according to the second hypothesis, the supply of burglar opportunities is greater than the demand of local offenders. The hypothesis is confirmed, since we find that local offenders are in the minority—only 21 per cent give an address in town. Torremolinos has more crime than other towns on the coast, both according to police data and our survey. The low proportion of locals does therefore not indicate that this is a quiet town, on the contrary, that the local delinquents are outnumbered by outsiders. However, the ‘spillover’ effect from the city of Malaga, just 12 kilometres away, is not predominant. Only 18 per cent of the offenders give an address in Malaga. Nor do they come from surrounding areas, the interior zone or the coastal district. The burglary market attracts long distance commuters: burglars from other countries and from other parts of Spain.

When we move another 20 kilometres down the coast to Fuengirola, we find that the locals constitute slightly less than half of the total offender population. Six per cent come from the close by municipalities on the coast. None of them came from the interior parts of the province. Thirty-six per cent of the ‘burglary market’ is captured by the same long distance commuters we found in Torremolinos: Spanish vagrants, Spanish nationals from other provinces, and foreigners. Six out of ten foreigners come from northern Africa, one from South America and three from northern Europe. Only 13 per cent of all identified burglars in Torremolinos, and 9 per cent of identified burglars in Fuengirola came from the closest city, Malaga. One can guess that the spillover effect diminishes with distance: Torremolinos is located 12 kilometres away from the city centre, Fuengirola at 33 kilometres.

The Geographical Origin of Burglars: Discussion of Findings

The basic problem with interpreting our data on the geographical origin of burglars is that most offenders are not caught. This is not a special case in Spain; we share that problem with all other studies on the same topic, from Shaw and McKay (1969) to Hesseling (1992).

In the 88 per cent of all burglary cases archived as unresolved, the police identify no fingerprints, there are no witnesses and no police informants. Some of these burglars might be professionals from other countries or from other parts of Spain. It is probable that a local offender runs a higher risk of identification than a person from elsewhere, with a face unknown to the local police officers and to potential witnesses.

On the other hand, the undetected burglars might also be locals. A small self-report survey carried out in Fuengirola showed that 48 per cent of all youngsters had ‘Entered a private property without permission’ (Caba Villarejo and Pérez Montaut 1994). Their questionnaire model has been used in other parts of Spain (Barberet et al. 1994) as well as in several other countries, and we can conclude that this rate of illegal entry is
considerably higher than in non-tourist areas. Meeting friends and playing in semi-abandoned tourist villa gardens, or in buildings under construction, may be a favourite pastime for local youngsters. Some of these playful gatherings may lead to petty thefts and burglaries, and such minor burglaries are seldom reported to the police. Had they been reported and the perpetrators found, the proportion of local offenders on the coast would have increased dramatically.

Although the number of uncleared crimes is substantial, there is an element of random bad luck in being caught, and the differences we find between caught offenders in Malaga and on the coast can hardly be explained by sample bias. Actual percentages in these charts may reflect police priorities in burglary investigations more than underlying differences in crime patterns. We would, for instance, not consider proved that more foreigners are involved in burglaries in Torremolinos than in Fuengirola. However, we would trust the following conclusions:

1. Burglary in Malaga is predominantly committed by local offenders.
2. Burglary on the coast is predominantly committed by outsiders.
3. The outsiders do not come from the city of Malaga. They are passers by with no fixed residence neither in Malaga, the interior part of the province nor on the coast. Many of them are illegal immigrants from other countries, predominantly northern Africa.

In the concluding section, we will relate these conclusions to our initial hypotheses on crime patterns and opportunity structures.

How Do Our Findings Relate to the Presented Hypotheses?

A hypothetical model for burglary opportunities in a city and the adjacent tourist area was presented, along with two hypotheses about actual crime patterns in these two areas. The first hypothesis—that blocked opportunities for burglary in the city of Malaga leads to a shift towards street robbery—was confirmed. Malaga, and Spain in general, was found to have higher rates of street robbery than of residential burglary. Burglary in commercial enterprises is also moderate, which gives strong empirical support to the hypothesis.

The second hypothesis, that crime is displaced from the city towards the tourist areas, was not confirmed. We find that the spillover effect is moderate. Our findings suggest that the crime opportunities on the coast are indeed exploited, but that they attract potential offenders from other provinces, and also from abroad. The nearby city offenders do not reach out towards these crime opportunities.

These findings might be of general interest to theories on whether choice structuring properties actually determine the crime level, or merely shift crime around from one location to another.

Crime displacement from the city towards the coast

Geographical displacement from the city of Malaga towards tourist areas assumes some sophistication and planning on behalf of the city burglar. The conclusion we reached
ran contrary to the hypothesis established. While we had expected to find that most offenders on the coast came from the city of Malaga, we found that this was not really so. The contribution of Malaga locals is moderate. The extra crime possibilities on the coast are exploited by migrants from outside the province, in many cases burglars from other countries. Why is this so?

One should be cautious about generalizing from our data in this specific setting. We have, perhaps, documented that most petty criminals are not very versatile, nor very capable of strategic planning. Potential delinquents whose local opportunities to commit burglaries are blocked are more likely to switch to other, even simpler forms of property crime than to travel to more distant targets for burglary. Crime opportunities outside the immediate area familiar to these burglars are not exploited by them. From this follows a cautious optimism: if crime targets are made less accessible, that does not imply that an equal amount of other, less accessible targets elsewhere will be sought out instead. Crime prevention measures may actually reduce the total volume of crime, and not just move it somewhere else.

Van Dijk, in an important article on crime trends in the light of opportunity theory, suggests that 'at a given opportunity structure there is room for a certain quota of offenders' (Van Dijk 1994: 116). Such a statement, with its flair of Durkheimian functionalism, suggests that offender-oriented measures against crime will not be very effective. Their position will be replaced by other offenders, attracted by the existing unexploited opportunities.

Our findings might be regarded as an illustration of this point. The given opportunity structure in tourist areas is exploited, although the number of local offenders is not sufficient to catch up with the opportunities. However, this 'demand' catching up with an existing 'supply' is not automatic; offenders from the closest city do not fill up the gap. Other factors intervene in this case. The most important external factor may be the existence of a giant international drug market on the coast, and the attraction Europe constitutes for young people from northern Africa. With the existing restrictive immigration policy in Spain, those who enter Malaga illegally must find themselves a living outside the regular labour market. Most of them find an honest, although 'black' job in agriculture or retail trade. Some of them will be attracted by the drug trade, and some of them will notice the possibilities for petty theft and burglary in the tourist areas. In such ways, the existing opportunity structure is filled.

REFERENCES


Bennett, T. and Wright, R. (1984), Burglars on Burglary. UK: Gower.


CIS (Centro de investigaciones sociológicas) (1982), Encuesta Nº 1313 (Survey of three inner city areas in Madrid, Malaga and Zamorra), Data available from the Survey Institute. Unpublished.


——(1996), 'La delincuencia contra comercios', Boletín Criminológico, 18, IAIC, Málaga.


OTHER TARGETS OR OTHER LOCATIONS?


